CENTRAL SCHOOL HISTORY

In September of 1917, Central School first opened her doors, accepting 681 students. The modern, three-story structure had been built at a cost of some $80,000. After 60 years of service to several generations of Astorians, it will cost almost that amount to tear her down.

Central School was officially dedicated exactly 60 years ago on this date, April 24, in 1918. Over the years it has adapted to the needs of the community, serving first as an eight-grade school, becoming Lewis & Clark Junior High School in 1926. The Parent-Teacher Association was organized in 1937. When Central reverted back to an elementary school in 1948, a sound-proof music room was built. The kitchen and lunch room were constructed in 1949. (In those days you could get two lunches for a quarter, but milk is still only a nickel!) The gyms were constructed in 1950. Re-organization of the EC School District in 1958 turned Central into a 1st through 6th Grade School. The State of Oregon granted Central a "standard" rating in 1972. Playground expansion took place in 1973. Kindergarten classes were added in 1974. A major re-organization in 1975 gave Central an enrollment of Kindergarten through 4th Grade, and it is in this capacity that Central Elementary School ends its history.

When it all started, back about 1916, the block between Irving and Jerome Avenues, bounded by 9th and 10th Streets, was a large hill. Jerome Avenue between 9th and 10th had not yet been cut through. Fritz Voss' horse barn was situated on the corner of 9th and Jerome. The corner of 10th and Irving was a big pond. The children of the neighborhood played there, floating on rafts and catching bull frogs. Today, for a little while longer, they swing on the swings and swoop down the slide.

Central School stayed "modern" in the sense that it kept in touch with events in the community, the nation and the world. This awareness was a source of deep pride and inspired loyalty to the school--not just to the building, of course, but to the spirit of what was happening there. Principals came and went, teachers and staff changed, programs and traditions evolved, but the school itself served as the framework for this learning, growing, teaching, reaching out.

World War II is long since over, but the students who attended Central School in those anxious years collected more than 62,000 pounds of paper, (they won the paper drive!), and bought over $40,000 worth of Savings Stamps and Bonds. Wagons and boxes of scrap metal were gathered. You will find no trophies dating before 1945 at Central, although teams and students had won them. They were donated to the Scrap Metal Drive and melted down for their vital materials.

Going even further back in time, during World War I, Central students bought Savings Stamps, collected fox glove leaves for medicine (digitalis), collected feathers for pillows, made bandages and studied first aid in Red Cross classes.

During its distinguished time of service to the community of Astoria, Central School has touched the lives of thousands of young people. Many of these students went on to colleges and universities, to the working world and into professional careers. More than one student returned to teach here at Central. Two former students are on the staff today. One former student went to Congress. Some went to war. And one group of boys, who studied together, chased around the Astoria Column together, joined Company C and went to Bataan together and never came home again.

Most of the beautiful busts and friezes that decorate the walls of this auditorium were gifts to Central School from graduating classes of years ago:

George Washington -- Class of 1922

Theodore Roosevelt -- Class of 1923

Woodrow Wilson ----- Class of 1924

Benjamin Franklin -- Class of 1925

Abraham Lincoln ---- Gift from McClure School

The Landing of the Pilgrims

The Expedition of Lewis and Clark, guided part-way by Sacajawea

Victory and the Flag leading the Armed Forces and the American People

These gifts represent the hopes and ambitions, the aspirations of these young people, and their appreciation to the School that nurtured them for a few very important years.

(Compiled from old records,
witnesses and friends. C.A.)